

Profiles in NOAA Leadership

James F. (Jeff) Kimpel, Ph.D.

Director

National Severe Storms Laboratory - NSSL, Norman, OK

Short professional Biography

Education:

Certificate: Institute for Educational Management, Harvard University, 1982
Ph.D., Meteorology, Minor: Oceanography and Limnology, University of Wisconsin, 1973
M.S., Meteorology, University of Wisconsin, 1970
Basic Meteorology Program (USAF), University of Texas, 1964-1965
B.S., Psychology, Denison University, 1964

Professional Experience:

Senior Vice President and Provost, University of Oklahoma, 1992-1995
Dean, College of Geosciences, University of Oklahoma, 1987-1992
Director, Weather Center Programs, University of Oklahoma, 1986-1994
President, Applied Systems Institute, Inc., Norman, Oklahoma, 1985-1988
Director, School of Meteorology, University of Oklahoma, 1981-1987
Associate Dean, College of Engineering, University of Oklahoma, 1978-1981
Assistant, Associate, Full Professor, School of Meteorology, U. of Oklahoma, 1973 – 2001
Lecturer, Department of Meteorology, University of Wisconsin Madison, 1973

Honors and Awards:

Performance Bonus, federal Senior Executive; 1999-2003
Certified Consulting Meteorologist (#567), American Meteorological Society, 1997
Elected Fellow of the American Meteorological Society, 1989
Electrical Power Research Institute (EPRI) Exploratory Research Fellow, 1988-1990
University of Oklahoma Regents' Award for Superior Service, 1987
Four major teaching awards, 1972, 1979, 1981, 1984
Bronze Star for Meritorious Service, Vietnam, 1968

Selected Activities in Professional Organizations:

Chair, Ethics Committee, American Meteorological Society, 2002 - present
Elected President, American Meteorological Society, 2000
Chair, Review of the April 14, 1999 Sydney Hailstorm for the Australian Government, 1999
Member, DOE/Battelle/Pacific Northwest National Laboratory Review Committee for Basic Science, 1998-2002
Chair, DOE/Battelle Review Panel for the Global Change Program, 1999
Elected Councilor, American Meteorological Society, 1998-1999
Chair, Committee on Societal Impacts, American Meteorological Society, 1996-1999
Chair, NOAA/NWS National Centers for Environmental Prediction Advisory Panel, 1996-1998
Co-Chair, U.S. Weather Research Program, Prospectus Development Team on Socio-Economic Aspects of Weather, 1996-1998
Member, National Academy of Sciences/National Research Council Board on Natural Disasters, 1994-1999
Chair, Board of Trustees, University Corporation for Atmospheric Research, 1991-1993
Chair, Advisory Committee for the Atmospheric Sciences, NSF, 1989-1991

Membership in Professional Organizations: American Meteorological Society, National Weather Association, American Geophysical Union, Sigma Xi, Phi Kappa Phi

Grants and Contracts: Principal Investigator or Co-PI on 14 grants and contracts totaling approximately \$4.2 Million from NSF, NOAA, EPRI, DOD, DOE, and private industry, 1974 – present



I believe my style is "open", with a team approach, ensuring everyone in the organization is informed". I treat everyone with respect and trust that they will do the right thing. I work with my door open, so that anyone can drop in if they wish.



I also believe strongly in “individual empowerment”. Get the best people and let them do their job. I trust that everyone will rise to the occasion. We must all be committed to “doing the mission of the organization”.



Preamble

I would like to start out by giving you a short statement of my leadership philosophy. Leadership is different than management. A good leader will display an ability to change organizations [for the better]. Leaders must “get to the soul” of the organization to accomplish this. I’ve known “good teachers” and “not so good teachers”. The same is true for bosses. I’ve observed bosses who have taken a one sided approach and have not included the entire team or considered everyone’s perspective.

We must take into consideration our “customers” needs and include a broad array of perspectives in finding solutions to their problems or needs. For example, I recall when we (the University of Oklahoma) had Dr. Doug Lilly as the director of a research institute. Doug is a true intellect and a brilliant theoretical scientists specializing in the study of small-scale dynamics. He helped us devise a leadership model, which we called “Distributed Leadership”. This model brought together peer managers and allowed them to focus on what each did best. For example, one might be the intellectual leader, another might focus on national trends and the political process, and a third might focus on the state legislature and governor’s office, and so on. Meeting regularly and sharing information is the key to the success of this model. Decisions were made by consensus.

I believe that communication is extremely important. I don’t think that there is an organization that doesn’t experience communication difficulties at some time. We have a philosophy here that when we have our biennial staff gatherings, we do not call them “Retreats”. Rather we call them “Advances”. We want to move forward while making sure that everyone is involved in vision setting and the early stages of planning. Also, we communicate with our employees on a weekly basis via “managers’ meeting notes” prepared by the director.

Generic leadership oriented questions

Q: How would you describe your leadership philosophy or style?

A: The above example more or less illustrates my leadership philosophy. I believe my style is “open, with a team approach, ensuring everyone in the organization is informed”. I treat everyone with respect and trust that they will do the right thing. I work with my door open, so that anyone can drop in if they wish.

Q: Can you explain to us a leadership style or philosophy that has “caught your eye” or intrigued you? Can you name a leader that exemplified this philosophy or someone after whom you have modeled your leadership path?

A: I think it is important for a leader to have a clear vision, developed with your employees, and be tenacious in working to make it happen. Set the bar high. I learned this from Frank Stehli who was Dean of the College of Geosciences at the University of Oklahoma from 1982 – 1986. For example, when some things were impossible to do at the university, Frank created a not-for-profit company with the university’s blessing and did them there. This illustrated an attitude of “get the job done” with an “out of the box approach or unconventional way of doing things”. I believe in and support this style of leadership.

Q: Is there a leadership style that you would characterize as “dramatically different” that you have embraced?

A: While holding a leadership position, I have always tried to engage in activities expected of the typical employee in my organization. For example, scientists are expected to perform research, and engage in educational and outreach activities. Thus, at various times, I have published, taught classes, supervised graduate students, and performed service for external groups while leading the organization. I believe this

keeps me “grounded” and “part of the gang” so that I am better able to appreciate employee perspectives.

I also believe strongly in “individual empowerment”. Get the best people and let them do their job. I trust that everyone will rise to the occasion. We must all be committed to “doing the mission of the organization”.

When filling vacant positions, we have a “targeted hiring” approach. We seek out the nation’s best. We are willing to hold out until we can attract and hire those people with the best expertise and who display a willingness to work well on a team. By that I mean, our number one criteria is to seek someone who is selfless, will be totally committed to the mission, while supporting others and sharing success. We seek people who are truly happy with other’s successes.

Q: What leadership lesson did you learn late in your career that you wish you had learned sooner?

A: I wish I’d learned the business case for diversity sooner. Very shortly, if not already, less than 25% of the high school graduates in this country will be white males. If we want to be a successful nation in the future, we need diversity in all jobs and at all levels of management.

Years ago, leaders in the oil industry came to the conclusion that they needed to have more diversity in their workforce to maintain competitiveness, improve their business models, and maximize their flexibility and adaptability to uncertainty in the future of oil exploitation. They began by asking the question, “what do we need to do now to insure that we are in business 50 years from now”? They began developing partnerships among corporations, universities and scholarship donors, to build curricula and programs in various historically black colleges and universities that would train minority students and get them ready for advanced degrees, with the ultimate goal of providing sufficient expertise and diversity of perspectives to solve complex problems.

Q: What is your favorite book and does it have a significant leadership message that you gleaned from it?

A: The Art of the Long View, by Peter Schwartz. The book suggests that leaders should have a number of scenarios on how the future will unfold and affect their organization. Planning and execution can then be undertaken in a complex yet defined environment that allows for options at critical times.

NOAA Centric or specific leadership issues

Q: Do you see a private sector example from which NOAA could learn or adopt certain positive leadership aspects?

A: I am very impressed with the “microcompanies” that Lockheed Martin has established throughout many of its operations. These small groups are project oriented and given considerable responsibility and authority. Each microcompany must include a customer.

Q: Do you see another government department or agency from which NOAA could learn or adopt certain positive leadership aspects?

A: I am quite impressed with what James Lee Witt did to improve the status and effectiveness of FEMA by engaging FEMA’s customers throughout the country. James Witt transformed the agency while pulling his constituents into the decision making process. By conducting regional emergency response scoping meetings, he was effective in making sure that the agency was meeting the public’s needs, and highlighting the necessity of government adequately supporting the agency to fill its mission.

Also, the National Science Foundation seems to have established itself as the premier government science agency. NOAA would benefit from a careful study.

I believe that communication is extremely important. I don't think that there is an organization that doesn't experience communication difficulties at some time. We have a philosophy here that when we have our biennial staff gatherings, we do not call them “Retreats”.



Rather we call them “Advances”. We want to move forward while making sure that everyone is involved in vision setting and the early stages of planning. Also, we communicate with our employees on a weekly basis via “managers’ meeting notes” prepared by the director.



Q: Describe your perspective on NOAA’s succession planning strategies.

A: NOAA is certainly aware of the importance of succession planning and the LCDP is an important step in the right direction. It behooves every manager to develop leadership potential without even thinking they have the right to select their successor. What I mean by this is that if all agencies committed to developing leadership, at all levels, with the understanding that the talent would be appropriately applied to any organization, then leadership would be upwardly and horizontally mobile. Thus, agencies would ultimately be preparing leadership for each other and we all benefit.

Finally, I would like to ask, “what would it take to get the NOAA Leadership Competencies Development Program (LCDP) Senior Executive Service (SES) certified”? The LCDP program goes a long way in preparing its participants for SES and there should be some “official” recognition of their accomplishments toward SES applications process.

Q: How should NOAA properly align itself for the future trends toward ecosystem management, integrated observing, earth system modeling, and holistic approaches to our mission?

A: “If I had the answer to this question, I think I could be the Leader of NOAA or very rich”. “Every journey begins with a single step” – we must get started. These are all very complex issues and will require a diverse/inclusive approach to address them. NOAA does not have a monopoly on any of these. In my opinion NOAA spends too much time and effort looking inward. A good first step would be to encourage partnerships with external groups including other agency, private, and academic entities. We have to be better partners. A strong grants program is essential as is maintaining core scientific and technical capabilities. The recently completed NOAA Research Review Team report offers many good suggestions.

Forming these partnerships in the proper way is critical. Each partner’s responsibilities must be clearly articulated and understood. The partnerships must

be adaptive and adequately funded with renewal periods that reflect the realities of the time needed to develop ideas, conduct research and produce research results. When building the partnership, it is important to build a “critical mass” of expertise [heavy hitters] to advance the concept and an MOA, to higher-level managers who make funding or support decisions. The goal is to develop ideas that are so good they sell themselves.

Profiles in NOAA Leadership

Rebecca Lent, Ph.D.

Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs NOAA Fisheries

Short Professional Biography: I studied economics at the University of California at San Diego where I earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1975 and a Master's degree in 1978. I earned a Ph.D. in resource economics from Oregon State University in 1984. In 1983-84, I was a post-doctoral researcher in France, sponsored by the National Science Foundation and the Foreign Ministry of France. Between 1984 and 1986, I served as an Invited Professor of fishery economics at the Université du Québec à Rimouski. From 1986-1992, I was an associate professor of Agricultural and Resource Economics at Université Laval in Canada. I spent a sabbatical year in Washington, D.C., from 1991-1992 conducting research at the International Food Policy Research Institute and U.S. Department of Agriculture. I joined the National Marine Fisheries Service in 1992, serving as an economist, and later as the Chief of the agency's Atlantic Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Management Division. I served as the Southwest Regional Administrator in 2000 and in this capacity directed NOAA's fisheries management and science programs in the southwestern United States, Hawaii, and the U.S. Trust Territories. I led the development of several Fishery Management Plans (FMP) include the Atlantic and Pacific HMS plans, the Atlantic billfish Plan Amendment, and the Coral Reef Ecosystem Fishery Management Plan. I played an important role in improving the effectiveness of international marine fisheries relationships including implementation of the International Dolphin Conservation Act, serving as an Alternate United States Commissioner to the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), and participating in negotiations at the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna (ICCAT). I also attended negotiations for the South Pacific Tuna Treaty, the Northern Albacore Treaty, and the Convention on the Conservation and Management of Highly Migratory Fish Stocks in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean. I am currently the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs at NOAA Fisheries. Additionally, I am the designated lead for NOAA Fisheries in international affairs. I currently live in Chevy Chase, Maryland, with my husband Dr. Utpal Vasavada and daughter Kajal.

Generic leadership oriented questions

Q: Can you explain to us a leadership style or philosophy that has “caught your eye” or intrigued you? Can you name a leader that exemplified this philosophy or someone after whom you have modeled your leadership path?

A: Two people have influenced my leadership style or philosophy: my college professor Dr. Dick Johnston and a previous supervisor in Sustainable Fisheries, Bruce Morehead. Dr. Johnston cared very much about other people and he espoused a “selflessness” approach to his teaching and mentoring.

I recall him saying, “If we are nice to all people, it all comes back to us in the end “. He taught me the importance of caring for other people.

Bruce Morehead coached me through a difficult period in my leadership journey by allowing me to express my emotions freely, instilled a feeling of security while helping me work through difficult management issues. Bruce coached me through some difficult times and helped me to understand how to deal effectively with the “challenging leadership styles” of certain tough bosses in my past.

Q: How would you describe your leadership philosophy or style?



I think NOAA is doing a great job when it comes to employee support, training, and paying attention to people's needs. I can't say that I'm aware of a private sector organization that does any better than NOAA.



There are examples of agencies that have been effective in breaking down “Turf Battles.” I see that as an obstacle in moving forward and making NOAA as efficient as possible.



A: I suppose I am more of a “Facilitator” than anything else. I try to avoid “command and control” leadership. I have seen some people use this style and I said, “I’m not going to be like that...” I favor of a more “self-less, people –oriented style.[I tend to look at ‘Fisheries people’ and listen and take care of them. I think every person working here counts.”

I had an intern shadow me for several days and at the end of the shadowing experience, the person made the comment: “I appreciate you because you treat everyone the same, with kindness and respect.” I guess this translates to the same leadership philosophy described above and espoused by Dr. Johnston and Bruce Morehead. “Nice” also means you’re honest with people; this is very important in all aspects of our work, especially evaluation.

Q: Is there a leadership style that you would characterize as “dramatically different” that you have embraced?

A: The two previous questions really describe my approach to dealing with and leading people. Most importantly, I think it is essential to be nice and care for other people. A leadership style that I have lost confidence in is the “command and control” approach.

“Here’s a career tip: spend some time working overseas and learn a foreign language...” [At this point Rebecca began speaking fluent French with interviewer Earl Meredith, a moment which she obviously enjoyed very much]

Q: What leadership lesson did you learn late in your career that you wish you had learned sooner?

A: Important lessons that I’ve learned in my career include self-confidence and flexibility. I learned that when you lack self-confidence, you make mistakes. You develop self-confidence over time by gaining experience and being prepared. It is important to carve out time to adequately prepare for presentations or meetings. Practice. Spend time with other people and learn from your mistakes. [“ Take time to reach out to people when you need to patch things up.”]

When it is time to make career decisions, take the road that will allow you the flexibility to take different directions in your career while allowing you to return or go back to your original path when the time comes. Make the most of opportunities. I gained valuable experience from an opportunity to work in Zaire Africa on food systems development programs. Finally, networking and sharing information among many people will afford you the maximum learning opportunity.

On luck and opportunity: “Some people say it’s luck, some people say we make our own luck...I think you have to be ready to take advantage of opportunities, by being there, being known, and networking. People tend to consider hiring someone whose work they already know and have confidence in.”

Q: What is your favorite book and does it have a significant leadership message that you gleaned from it?

A: I do a lot of reading, but few are specifically on leadership. I tend to read fiction. As a teenager, I read many good books. One that was a favorite, and that I just shared with my daughter, was Jane Eyre. It is funny how closely I identified with Jane. I remember she was kind and loving, displayed strong principles, and she overcame heartaches and adversity. She makes all the right decisions...”

NOAA Centric or specific leadership issues

Q: Do you see a private sector example or another government department or agency from which NOAA could learn or adopt certain positive leadership aspects?

A: I think NOAA is doing a great job when it comes to employee support, training, and paying attention to people’s needs. I can’t say that I’m aware of a private sector organization that does any better than NOAA. There are examples of agencies that have been effective in breaking down “Turf Battles.” I see that as an obstacle in moving forward and making NOAA as efficient as possible. We must be

“unified” as a NOAA team and support one another. If we are scattered, we won’t be as effective, thus we should focus on NOAA as a holistic entity, with all its diversity.

Q: Describe your perspective on NOAA’s succession planning strategies.

A: I think it is very important for institutional memory to be passed down. Mentoring is an important and efficient way to do this. The NOAA Leadership Competencies Development Program (LCDP) is a great way to provide leadership development, mentoring, and personal growth opportunities. And there are several other NOAA training programs and opportunities for aspiring leaders. You have to investigate and look for them. When you consider the statistics of the number of people who will be retiring soon, it is clear that we need to develop the next generation of NOAA leaders, right now.

Q: How should NOAA properly align itself for the future trends toward ecosystem management, integrated observing, earth system modeling, and holistic approaches to our mission?

A: Vice Admiral Lautenbacher observed that when you read the recent ‘Ocean Commission Report,’ NOAA should take the lead. But we’ll only be able to do it if we are unified. We are at an advantage if we are unified, rather than scattered.

Ecosystem approaches must have a unified NOAA team to succeed. We need to work together, break down those turf battles, and work collaboratively. I think: “what is the best way for NOAA to get this job done?” It is difficult for some to think this way, but as long as we can argue that we are focusing on the efficiency of NOAA as a whole- then we are doing the job well.”

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Profiles in NOAA Leadership

Dr. Usha Varanasi Science and Research Director Northwest Fisheries Science Center NOAA Fisheries

Short Professional Biography

Dr. Usha Varanasi is director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) in Seattle, WA, which conducts basic and applied research to support the management and conservation of the Pacific Northwest region's anadromous and marine fishery resources and their habitats. She has held this position since 1994, when she became the first woman to lead a NOAA Fisheries' science center.

With almost 30 years of service in NOAA, Dr. Varanasi has dedicated much of her career to applying chemistry to critical biological questions, advancing our understanding in fisheries-related fields, and improving regulatory, management, and public policy decisions. Her research provided an understanding of how marine organisms (invertebrates, fish, and marine mammals) accumulate and process contaminants, revolutionizing the field, and led to the development of techniques that help us better understand and thus reduce the impacts of pollution on fisheries resources, and ensure that seafood is safe for human consumption. Prior to joining NOAA, Dr. Varanasi conducted research on marine mammals to understand how they process sound biochemically.

Dr. Varanasi has published articles in many scientific journals, including *Science*, *Nature*, and *Environmental Science* and has edited two books. She serves on many expert committees and scientific boards and is the recipient of a number of distinguished awards, including the **Presidential Rank Award for Meritorious Service and the Department of Commerce Gold Medal**. Dr. Varanasi received her B.Sc degree with honors from Bombay University in India, her M.S. degree in chemistry from the California Institute of Technology, and her Ph.D. in organic chemistry from the University of Washington, where she now holds an adjunct professorship.

Dr. Varanasi is deeply committed to the education of students in the sciences and the mentoring of young leaders. ***Note: as the interview began, Dr. Varanasi sought to include an assistant in her office in the interview because... "each one of these activities is an opportunity for learning...for all of us, right?"***



I think it is hard to capture any leadership style in a [single] statement, but I can tell you what I have observed about myself over the years, which has helped define my actions as a leader.



Generic leadership oriented questions

Q: How would you describe your leadership philosophy or style?

A: I think it is hard to capture any leadership style in a [single] statement, but I can tell you what I have observed about myself over the years, which has helped define my actions as a leader. I maintain a high level of enthusiasm and I am basically an optimistic person at heart. I admire the great American philosopher R.W. Emerson and share his belief that “Nothing great is ever achieved without enthusiasm.”

I do not have preconceived notions of what I can or cannot do. If it seems possible, even though it is something I may not have considered in the past, I am willing to give it a try. I remain open-minded.

I don’t get stressed out by uncertainty. I don’t need the future to be always clear and certain [before deciding on a course of action].

As a scientist, I do think things through in considerable depth. However, when opportunities come about, I do not allow myself to think too much...or become paralyzed by analysis. I use my judgment [and intuition] too.

Sometimes I expect more out of my staff because of my tendency to personally take on difficult challenges. I look for [things] that are challenging and adventuresome.

I am aware of what I don’t do well. This helps me to find other people to work with in those areas that I may not excel in. I am not afraid to surround myself with bright, intelligent, and expert staff.

Experience and making mistakes are incredibly valuable. I have learnt and grown a lot this way.

Finally, I have a good sense of humor and have learnt to use it in stressful situations. This is very important.

Q: Can you explain to us a leadership style or philosophy that has “caught your eye” or intrigued you? Can you name a leader that exemplified this philosophy or someone after whom you have modeled your leadership path?

A: When I was growing up in India, I attended a girls school where I met a female principal who believed that girls could achieve anything that boys could! Her leadership style was daring considering this took place in India several decades ago. She taught her students that success is not dependent on gender or how you look or what others think of you. I’ve embraced this belief and it has helped me progress in my career.

I don’t completely style my leadership after any one person. I adopt leadership traits from many people such as the late Dr. Nancy Foster (who was a wonderful mentor to me), my high school principal, my husband, and world leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. My leadership is modeled after many people and years of experience and continues to change and grow as I learn and experience more.

Q: Is there a leadership style that you would characterize as “dramatically different” that you have embraced or one that you reject?

A: I don’t think it is wise to follow a single mentor too closely and lose sight of yourself or your organization’s unique needs and direction. There may be as many different leadership styles as there are people. Experiences in life make [us all] unique. I absorb [bits and pieces] from many different people with many different styles. It is important to not only have strong strategic thinking, vision, and intellect, but to have good “people” skills. I’ve known people who were very intelligent, had vision and were strategic thinkers, but had little heart or weak people skills. People can also limit you sometimes, especially if you become [*too extremely people oriented*] at the expense of the organization. I have seen leaders who are so attached to some of their staff that they can’t see their limitations. Eventually, this harms both the leaders and their staff.

I maintain a high level of enthusiasm and I am basically an optimistic person at heart. I admire the great American philosopher R.W. Emerson and share his belief that “Nothing great is ever achieved without enthusiasm.”



It is impossible to please everyone and it is important to keep the goals of the organization at the forefront. One has to be clear with staff about the goals of an organization, which may not always be in sync with what individual staff may want. You need to find just the right mix. And also, keep in mind that while people can achieve so many great things... not *every* person (be they boys or girls, men or women) can or wants to achieve what you want (or hope) that they will achieve.

Life's experiences will contribute to your leadership lessons. "Knowledge can be transferred – Wisdom comes from experience."

Q: What leadership lesson did you learn late in your career that you wish you had learned sooner?

A: An important lesson that I've learned is that you cannot fix everything yourself. You need other people who will offer a variety of ideas and solutions. People may not embrace a solution to a problem that is "one-sided." One direction (top down) thinking doesn't work. You must consider other people's ideas. I used to have a tendency to solve my staff's problems for them, but now I tend to ask them..."what potential solutions do you have here?" I learned that it is easier for people to embrace solutions to problems when the solution comes from them.

Since I come from a science background, I learned that I have a tendency to cogitate over issues [too much], using many different perspectives in science [and philosophy]; but people aren't always predictable, and yet they are a big factor in problem-solving. You have to learn to be partners with people, but when a decision needs to be made, you need to make it and stick to it. Remember, you are not running a popularity contest; you must be prepared to make difficult decisions

Another lesson is that you must learn to be a leader with people who have previously been your peers. When you get into a leadership position, you must learn to be sensitive without being patronizing...treat subordinates as equals, but stick to your own decisions. –Also, if you find yourself in the position

where you become a supervisor to former colleagues who may have competed for the same position, it is best to keep a respectful distance for a while to allow them to process the situation in their own way...give them a 'period of calm,' then later ask them "how can we work together for the good of the organization?"

I've learnt to be acutely aware of non-verbal cues in communications. I am an extrovert in that I often can speak very quickly and people who do not know me think that I am not listening, but I am constantly observing people's reactions and processing the information. Ninety percent of communication is non-verbal. When I notice that my colleagues are sending me cues, I try my best to reach out to them.

[A musing on difficult employees...]

When you spend so much time with difficult employees [trying to help them be better or solve their problems], you can sometimes 'de-value' your top performers. You must guard against that.

Q: What is your favorite book and does it have a significant leadership message that you gleaned from it?

A: My answer may disappoint you. I love to read, but not leadership books [per se]. I love to read *mystery stories* because I enjoy putting clues together with logic to answer questions or solve mysteries. If I had to choose one book, at the risk of being quoted, I would cite Maxwell Maltz's *Psycho Cybernetics* because I was fascinated by how the brain works and how thought processes can be concentrated to influence behaviors.

I did read Stephen Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* once. And, I also remember reading Wayne Dyer's *Power of Intention*. And... *My Experiments in Truth*, by Mahatma Gandhi. This work showed me the importance of being humble and knowing your own weaknesses. Many books that I read are more about 'philosophy of life' rather than leadership. I suppose that I derive leadership lessons from reading philosophy. So these are just a few of the books I've read...but I read lots of good books!"

I am aware of what I don't do well. This helps me to find other people to work with in those areas that I may not excel in. I am not afraid to surround myself with bright, intelligent, and expert staff.



NOAA Centric or specific leadership issues

Q: Do you see a private sector example from which NOAA could learn or adopt certain positive leadership aspects?

A: Since I have never worked in the private sector, it would be from an outside perspective looking in. Of course, we need to recognize that sometimes “the grass looks greener on the other side of the fence...,” and so we must be careful not to glorify [anyone or anything that we truly do not know]. However, some things NOAA can adapt for its uses and some things it can’t. For instance, hiring and firing is very different in the public sector compared to the private sector. But without naming a particular private sector company, I can give you some aspects of traits I admire...

I think it is very hard in agencies or organizations with complex missions to balance a focus on expertise in specific areas with breadth. I know of a company whose success I primarily attribute to the fact that they are able to balance these two different aspects very well. This company values their technical experts by placing them in units where there are many related experts. These experts are led by a supervisor who is also a technical expert, however, when the company needs to build a product or application, the supervisors compose teams of experts from different specialized units. This concept is so ingrained in the culture that staff know that they will always be working in a matrix managed mode, but that they will have an opportunity to consult or “recharge their batteries” in-between projects by working with their peers in their home unit. There seems to be no ownership of staff in the mind of the unit or “home” supervisor as the budget to pay for staff comes from the matrix managed team projects.

A company is successful when there are not rigid boundaries. NOAA can learn from this, but must adapt this, or any example, to fit the government’s rules and structure. In recent years, NOAA has made good strides with its matrix management approach,

but it is not yet ingrained in the agency. In NOAA, we bring people in for special assignments, according to their expertise, and then they go “home” to their normal job [back to their home office]. However, in a line office structure, it is difficult for a person to fill another position [without harming], in some way, his or her job in their “home” position. This is a problem. People who offer their expertise at an organizational level must have the security of knowing that they can safely return “home” again. You have to have “two homes” (in matrix management), and know that both places are secure in terms of your career. *We need to build a matrix management system where we can use our enormous supply of scientific and technical expertise for the good of the whole organization.* It is critical that we make sure that our staff are nurtured, given enough independence to develop in their areas of expertise and feel secure that they will always be valued and have a long future with the agency when they leave their “home” office to participate in matrix management opportunities.

I see many leadership challenges, especially in the context of overseeing a science enterprise, since that is where my experience lies. How do we work as a science team without losing our individual identity? You want your staff to carry an innate sense of personal pride, and to be individually recognized for their work, but just doing that is not enough. *It is the application of science, which must be used to make a difference on the ground in terms of NOAA’s responsibilities, e.g., stewardship of the species we manage and protection of their habitats.* This is where challenges arise because NOAA is science-based agency and scientists can be and should be independent thinkers. Sometimes we push too hard for everybody to work as a team and we run the risk of losing great independent thinkers. Other times, scientists may not be aware, because they do not actively interact with managers and policy makers, what issues or areas are critical for the agency to pursue, and that is not good either. *We must strike a balance between allowing scientific staff enough freedom to be satisfied professionally and recognized in their field, with being practical enough to see how the science applies to the real world and work hand-in-hand with other components of NOAA.* In the NOAA Fisheries science community we have taken that challenge head on and have defined and

Experience and making mistakes are incredibly valuable. I have learnt and grown a lot this way.



provided opportunities for giving scientific advice to managers while still being able to conduct cutting edge strategic research. I find this balancing act very stimulating.

Q: Do you see another government department or agency from which NOAA could learn or adopt certain positive leadership aspects?

A: Among the government agencies I have worked with, I feel NOAA is the best perhaps because we are small in size and have so many different areas of scientific expertise. NOAA is not a typical government agency; it is amazingly vibrant. I have met many enthusiastic, excited people with pride of ownership for the mission and our national mandates and their areas of expertise.

Note: at this point the time allotted for the interview had expired, and interviewer Earl Meredith asked Dr. Varanasi: "do you have more time to complete the questions?" she responded: "Of course...working with younger people in their training is my commitment, and it is so important!"

Q: Describe your perspective on NOAA's succession planning strategies.

A: NOAA's succession planning must be done in a generic sense because we are a government agency and cannot create a lot of new, challenging positions (without many organizational approvals) or pre-select individuals for particular roles. Therefore, a strong succession planning strategy is difficult. There are always a few "self-starters," but we must look after and develop all staff who could benefit from leadership training.

Succession planning in a pyramid-like structure is difficult in that fewer and fewer people ascend to the top. This is challenging if all who get training feel they must get to the top. We should separate the idea that leadership [is reserved for only those people reaching the top.] It is more about learning to do different things and in different ways at all levels of the organization. Also, there is a tendency to think that leadership training requires a person to constantly move from place-to-place, thereby disrupting your personal and family life. Instead, we need to create

considerable excitement in every workplace so people can enjoy their work and personal life and still develop leadership skills.

Mentoring is one good approach to developing leadership skills, but we must be careful that we are not playing favorites with a few chosen ones. We need several strategies to deal with succession planning, and so I say we need to bring together some "broad-scale, big-thinkers" to tackle the question of "how do we do that?" When we have a vacancy, there should be 10-20 people ready to fill it. But when people do not get the job [they set their sights on], how do we keep them motivated?...this is a big challenge.

Another issue is that when NOAA developed the leadership training concept years ago, in many cases the only people who could apply were people in transition or people who were appropriately placed in their life situation at the time. If we make it so, then many promising hardworking staff cannot take advantage of the programs, and we miss the opportunity to develop [the best] leaders. So...how do you do this while still allowing people to "have a life with other interests and be with their friends and families?" In our Center, we try to do lots of local training. For example, we bring experts to visit us and give seminars that all staff can attend and benefit from, using video technology in field stations. We also encourage interested staff to take advantage of NOAA's rotational assignments and advanced studies programs...so there are many ways to train and develop a diverse workforce.

Q: How should NOAA properly align itself for the future trends toward ecosystem management, integrated observing, earth system modeling, and holistic approaches to our mission?

A: I've given this subject a lot of thought over a long period of time. There are many models, and these can either help or hinder one's approach in this area. We need to be able to do science with a long-term vision and not just put out fires. However, it is important to keep scientists closely aligned with the managers who can bring, to the science, important management questions. In fisheries, for instance, it is

Finally, I have a good sense of humor and have learnt to use it in stressful situations. This is very important.



very difficult because of competing interests and [legal] mandates. We need to protect the scientists from being totally submersed in these challenges, but we should be doing [relevant] science where you can take care of some problems *before* they occur and give good scientific strategies to minimize others. So close alignment between scientists and managers is most important. We may never strike the right balance or configuration, of science and management, but in my opinion the “fisheries science and management organizational model has been very effective. In NOAA Fisheries science centers strategic research and scientific advice are balanced with the help of science center managers and the Science center director, whose budget and line of supervision is through the director of science in the agency, but who also have a close operating agreement with the regional administrator to ensure that proper scientific advice is given to the managers and that their needs for information are met.

Actually, NOAA is the perfect agency to lead the Nation’s ecosystem management programs. In the beginning, NOAA was formed as more of an applied science agency while NSF (National Science Foundation) was more pure science. *We need to make sure NOAA continues to be an exciting scientific place to work, even in difficult circumstances...by collaborating effectively with other scientists from universities, private companies, and other agencies. We need top-level scientists working on real-world problems. I think we are well on our way to reaching new heights in these areas.*



Profiles in NOAA Leadership

Dr. Stephan B. Smith

Chief

Decision Assistance Branch, Meteorological Development Laboratory (MDL), NWS

Short Professional Biography: I have a Masters and Ph.D in Meteorology from McGill University. I worked at a NOAA Cooperative Institute, CIRA in Colorado, for a couple of years before joining the NOAA/NWS in 1993. I have worked in MDL the entire time, first as a researcher and now as a branch chief. Since 1999, I have been the collateral duty NWS Diversity Liaison to NOAA's Diversity Council. I am currently the acting NWS executive member on the NOAA Diversity Council.

Generic leadership oriented questions

Q: How would you describe your leadership philosophy or style?

A: I employ a situational leadership style. I adapt my approach based on the situation and circumstances. It is important to maintain flexibility. There is always diversity present in any group of employees, so you have to adapt your leadership based on a person-to-person dynamic as opposed to one-dimensional, one-size-fits-all approach. I often try to take an "invisible" management style. For example, we are hosting a workshop this week here in our office. I've handed over the organization and logistics to another person. I plan on dropping in periodically, not fully attending, thus allowing that person to gain leadership skills. Task leads are urged to take their own leadership role, but I "tactically interject" myself when needed. I am results oriented and willing to jump in and take control if I'm needed. You can't be unrealistic to "force" people into situations that their skill sets don't support. You look for people who are ready and able to take on a leadership task, and then you give them a "gentle" nudge to get them started.

Q: Can you explain to us a leadership style or philosophy that has "caught your eye" or intrigued you? Can you name a leader that exemplified this

philosophy or someone after whom you have modeled your leadership path?

A: I find Gandhi's leadership style (non-authoritarian leadership invoked by unwavering commitment to an ideal) to be the most intriguing, as it was so different from the Western "heroic" leadership, yet highly successful. This idealistic style has a great deal of risk associated with it. The "change agent" philosophy may be contravening to one's working yourself up in the "corporate ladder". You may find yourself labeled as a "lone wolf" and potentially spurned by your superiors/leaders. However, the "wise leaders" in any organization will see the lone wolf as a valuable asset. The lone wolf is the one who can point out hidden weaknesses, thus allowing us to improve our organizations.

Q: Is there a leadership style that you would characterize as "dramatically different" that you have embraced?

A: Although I do use it if the situation dictates, I do not prefer an "autocratic, micro-management" leadership-style. When you find yourself under such leadership, it may be possible to "mitigate" it by committing yourself to earning the trust of your supervisor. You will be a better person in the end and perhaps provide a leadership example for others in their dealings with restrictive managers. Most autocratic leaders are not malicious in their intent. Most people are well intended and it is important to



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fully understand them in order to adapt to their leadership style.

Q: What leadership lesson did you learn late in your career that you wish you had learned sooner?

A: People will move mountains if they take ownership for a task or project. If you want things done you have to give them up, a leap of faith. You have to be willing to take a risk, be prepared to be disappointed sometimes, and allow for failure.

Additionally, I have learned that there are times when you just have to ask for something you want.

Q: What is your favorite book and does it have a significant leadership message that you gleaned from it?

A: I always go back to the Complete Works of Shakespeare. It is the best exploration of the “human condition” I know. Shakespeare helps us understand ourselves and see that we are all human and flawed.

No matter how much you think you know about yourself, there is always more to learn. Find another layer of your blind spot. Explore and push yourself to gain a deeper understanding of who you are. It may be painful. But it is well worth it, as people are more willing to follow others who are comfortable with themselves and have a deep understanding of who they are.

Also, you have got to be able to forgive yourself. If by taking a risk, and something bad happens, you must have the ability to simply forgive, learn from the mistake and move on.

NOAA Centric or specific leadership issues

Q: Do you see a private sector example from which NOAA could learn or adopt certain positive leadership aspects?

A: My impression is that the private sector does a much better job at rewarding and inspiring its top employees. In general, I think NOAA knows what to do. We just have to make the commitment. The best leadership models, for me, have been when my supervisors have taken the time or energy to offer me a deeper level of guidance and council during my performance review. We need more supervisors who put forth the effort to provide meaningful feedback to their employees.

Q: Do you see another government department or agency from which NOAA could learn or adopt certain positive leadership aspects?

A: I know other agencies only on a very superficial level.

Q: Describe your perspective on NOAA’s succession planning strategies.

A: I think if we create a NOAA culture that looks ahead and values leadership training we are on the right track. NOAA seems to be moving in that direction. That is good. However, I think this should be an “organic” approach. What I mean by this is, our leaders taking it upon themselves to personally mentor and develop the next generation of leaders.

Q: How should NOAA properly align itself for the future trends toward ecosystem management, integrated observing, earth system modeling, and holistic approaches to our mission?

A: The only way to do this is make senior management accountable to this vision. It will not happen otherwise. NOAA leadership has begun to make the commitment to developing a more integrated NOAA. We have begun to eliminate the “stove pipes” among our various agencies. The “matrix management” approach will tend to move the organization more towards the integrated NOAA. We must consider the timeframe to make this happen and be comfortable with it. There are still a number of funding questions and how PPBES will benefit us. It will take a lot of courage to see it through. Additionally, there may be a need to have more tangible incentives to make this happen.



Profiles in NOAA Leadership

Judith Gray

Acting Director

Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory,, OAR



Short Professional Biography: I studied meteorology at Penn State (BS, 1978) and University of Washington (MS, 1983). I have been a meteorologist, oceanographer, and physical scientist with NOAA for 25 years including 14 months as a Commissioned Officer in the NOAA Corps, stationed on the NOAA Ship OCEANOGRAPHER; 10 ½ years as a research scientist at the Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory in Seattle, where I focused on winds along mountainous coastlines; 6 years in Silver Spring, where I worked in what is now called the Office of Science Support at OAR Headquarters, was the Acting Deputy Director for all the Environmental Research Laboratories, and was a program manager in the Coastal Ocean Program; and 1 year at NOAA Headquarters in Washington, DC, in the very first Program Coordination Office for Deputy Under Secretary, Ray Kammer. I have been the Deputy Director of AOML since January, 1998, and was recently named Acting Director.

Generic leadership oriented questions

Q: How would you describe your leadership philosophy or style?

A: I am presently a mentor for Earl Meredith in NOAA's Leadership Competencies Development Program. Earl introduced me to the formal term of "servant leader." This captures my own leadership philosophy that a true leader is at the peak of the pyramid and the pyramid is inverted, i.e., the leader is there to serve all who work for them. This means that all those "buck stops here," difficult decisions are made based on what is best for the people I serve, the science we are conducting, and the organization for which we work.

Q: Can you explain to us a leadership style or philosophy that has "caught your eye" or intrigued you? Can you name a leader that exemplified this philosophy or someone after whom you have modeled your leadership path?

A: The style/philosophy I have just elucidated is exactly what I learned at the dinner table every night as a child. My father is my life-long mentor. My goal is

to have said about me at my retirement what was said about my father at his. He inspired trust, independence, risk-taking, and accountability in his staff of several hundred people as well as the thousands who worked for his company and his customers. I am attracted to leadership styles that employ consensus and encourage broad acceptance/understanding.

Q: Is there a leadership style that you would characterize as "dramatically different" that you have embraced?

A: I would say that a "command and control" style is dramatically different and acknowledge that there is probably a place and a time when that is needed in an organization. Make no mistake, I am as capable as anyone to take control and make tough decisions. It is the approach that is different. My experience of NOAA is that the people who work here do so because they love it; they are deeply dedicated to the agency's mission. The attributes of trust, independence, risk-taking, and accountability are exactly what needs to be nurtured in NOAA employees. I have chosen the approach that I have seen works best with scientists and science support staff; it is not "command and control."

I have been introduced to the formal term of "servant leadership." This captures my own leadership philosophy, i.e., a true leader is at the peak of the pyramid and the pyramid is inverted, thus the leader is there to serve all who work for them.

This means that all those “buck stops here,” difficult decisions are made based on what is best for the people I serve, the science we are conducting, and the organization for which we work.



Q: What leadership lesson did you learn late in your career that you wish you had learned sooner?

A: About 10 years ago I figured out that I don't need to jump in and make something happen every time an issue comes up. There is often a real elegance in letting problems and the people involved work things out for themselves. This is tough when I think I can help, however, sometimes the best help I can offer is to let people find solutions on their own, to be gently supportive and let them go.

On the flip side, a more recent lesson involves helping people be realistic about who they really are, their deficiencies as well as their strengths. I have been involved with the firing of five people since I joined AOML. In each case, the hardest part was helping the person see how they were perceived in the workplace and how they were affecting their coworkers. There are ways of delivering this type of “tough love” and none of them are easy. As a word of guidance, I suggest that before anyone attempts it they need to (1) be crystal clear about why they are doing it, (2) have a clear set of boundaries for the ensuing conversation and tools to keep the conversation on point, and (3) be completely honest with themselves and the other person. A person who is receiving criticism can sense dishonesty instinctively and will use that as a reason to dismiss the message you are trying to deliver.

Q: What is your favorite book and does it have a significant leadership message that you gleaned from it?

A: I know it's corny but I got a lot out of Steven Covey's “Seven Habits of Highly Effective People.” It led me to develop a personal mission statement that balances my vocational, a-vocational, and personal goals. Luckily, I was working with a bona fide strategic planner who was a tough reviewer and got me to focus deeply on my true goals that underlie my overall goal to grow up and be happy.

Another commonly-used book that made a big difference was “Getting to Yes.” It opened the door to using “Interest-Based Bargaining” when AOML was negotiating its first union contract. The process was open, friendly, and built broad consensus, instead of being difficult, obstructionist, and compromising.

NOAA Centric or specific leadership issues

Q: Do you see a private sector example after which you would like to see NOAA modeled or from which NOAA could adopt certain aspects?

A: No. But this is mainly lack of familiarity. I also think it is a mistake to assume that the Federal government should be run like a business. There are many business principles and approaches that work in the public sector and many that do not. For example, I often share my work-related challenges with my father and no matter how unique I think it is to working in the Federal government, he always has a personal story from the private sector to match or exceed my woes. Many solutions that are possible in the private sector are not available to us.

Q: Do you see another government agency after which you would like to see NOAA modeled or from which NOAA could adopt certain aspects?

A: I am uncertain of how they are managed now, however, several years ago I worked with NRL for a short time and deeply admired their acceptance that some of their best ideas/products came from their least structured research program, the 10% (I think that was the number) of their budget that was dedicated to strange ideas their staff were allowed to pursue. They were able to justify the investment based on their past success and not on any elaborate planning processes. I believe this is important for an agency with a NOAA-like proportion of research. We need to encourage strange and wild ideas among our researchers, stuff for which we cannot predict an outcome and for which failure rates are as high as the learning from failure.

Q: Describe your perspective on NOAA's succession planning strategies.

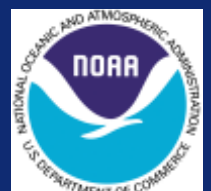
A: The LCDP and SES training programs are crucial to NOAA as more of us reach retirement age. I believe in planning ahead and developing in-agency

candidates for our senior leadership positions. I believe that our best chance for success in the future requires a large cadre of candidates with an intimate knowledge of NOAA and what it's like in the NOAA trenches.

Q: How should NOAA properly align itself for the future trends toward ecosystem management, integrated observing, earth system modeling, and holistic approaches to our mission?

A: No office in NOAA has the base funds to accomplish these lofty goals. I believe that the best way to motivate people to work on a specific topic is to allow folks to compete for funding to accomplish the objective. I am talking about a competition for NOAA offices. If the NOAA office includes partners in academia or the private sector, fine, but the focus should be on NOAA funds for NOAA research and development. A combination of a NOAA office's base funds with funds achieved through a competitive granting process is the best way to steer NOAA into the future. This is already happening in pockets of NOAA and is part of the success of our efforts to date in integrated observing. More generally, NOAA needs to continue to improve our interactions with the Department, OMB, and the Congress. We must build trust and understanding with these critical funding "wickets" to obtain the funding increases required to meet NOAA's mission.

About 10 years ago I figured out that I don't need to jump in and make something happen every time an issue comes up. There is often a real elegance in letting problems and the people involved work things out for themselves.





Profiles in NOAA Leadership

John Cunningham

**Director of NPOESS
National Polar-orbiting Operational Environmental
Satellite System, NESDIS**

I became the Director of NPOESS on November 1, 1999 after retiring from the Air Force following a 30 year career. During my Air Force career, I spent 25 years building and operating satellites and space-based remote sensors. I had multiple assignments with the Defense Meteorological Satellite Program as a sensor engineer, satellite engineer for the Block 5D-1 satellites, as Program Element Monitor on the Air Staff, and as Director of Engineering. I managed remote sensing programs supporting the Congressionally-directed US Atomic Energy Detection System. In my last job, I was program director for a system of satellites at the National Reconnaissance Office. I received a B.S. in Physics from Texas A&M University and an M.S. in Astronautical Engineering from the Air Force Institute of Technology.

Awards:

Presidential Rank Award
Department of Commerce Gold Medal
Legion of Merit
Defense Superior Service Medal
National Intelligence Medal of Achievement
Joseph Charyk Award of the National Space Club
NRO Gold Medal

Generic leadership oriented questions

Q: How would you describe your leadership philosophy or style?

A: First: Collaborative. What I mean by this is that a leader must maintain multiple perspectives that will help define common threads among diverse people, in establishing approaches to address problems or building teams. Second: Intuitive. What I've found is that engineers in general are very "literal" people. Thus, you must guide them in working through issues or solving problems by helping them define the finer elements of the issue. You help them "unravel the elegance" or "search for the salient points" of complex problems.

Q: Can you explain to us a leadership style or philosophy that has "caught your eye" or intrigued you? Can you name a leader that exemplified this philosophy or someone after whom you have modeled your leadership path?

A: Having spent many years in the Air Force, I had the opportunity to study various military leaders. Robert E. Lee was a brilliant leader. He had one curious trait that intrigues me. He gave somewhat vague instructions. He assumed that the people under his command were in the same mind set as he was and that they knew what he wanted them to do. This caused some communication problems, but also provided those people with freedom and flexibility to make their own decisions and grow. They learned from their mistakes. This worked really well with Jackson and Longstreet, but after Jackson's death, began to fail with the replacement Corps commanders. The main message that I learned from Lee was: that you need to "bring people along with you" [in your thought process].



There are times when you have to use an "autocratic" leadership style. However, it is important to know not to make it a norm. To do a good job at developing leaders, you should keep mentors from becoming "figure heads".

The role of mentoring should be incorporated into job performance measures. Finally, it is important to include or keep the “third tier” involved.

General George Marshall and General Dwight D. Eisenhower were two other military leaders that intrigued me. Marshall was a great General, Chief of Staff and Statesman who lead the “Marshall Plan” to rebuild Europe after World War II. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953. He was the obvious choice to lead the Allied armies in WWII, but stayed in the US as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and let the “honor and glory” (as seen by many) go to another man, Eisenhower, as he (Marshall) kept the military running smoothly to support the global war.

Eisenhower was the Supreme Commander of Allied Expeditionary Forces in Western Europe in 1943 – 1945. He had no combat experience in WWI and had spent years as a major. He was facing retirement as a Lt Colonel, at best. Marshall selected him to be on his staff. The way that Marshall worked was to select someone, then work them very, very hard in a series of jobs of ever increasing responsibility and complexity. If they were successful, he set them free, “on their own.” Marshall selected Eisenhower as the commander for the North African invasion and then as the Supreme Allied Commander not because of his combat skills and experience, but because of his ability to perform as a staff officer, a planner, a leader, and someone able to make the hard and often “politically sensitive” decisions that come with coalition warfare.

Q: Is there a leadership style that you would characterize as “dramatically different” that you have embraced or rejected?

A: There are times when you have to use an “autocratic” leadership style. However, it is important to know not to make it a norm.

Q: What leadership lesson did you learn late in your career that you wish you had learned sooner?

A: I would like to have learned sooner, that “sarcasm”, even though it may have been intended jokingly or non-negatively, is not a good thing. You should limit your use of sarcasm or joking to only those people who you are very close to or know that they understand your intentions.

Q: What is your favorite book and does it have a significant leadership message that you gleaned from it?

A: The Army at Dawn, by Rick Adkins has a strong message about the “command and control” leadership model during the beginning of the war in North Africa.

Undaunted Courage, by Stephen Ambrose tells a story that is akin to the Apollo 13 Mission. It is the tale of the Lewis and Clark expedition. It is particularly interesting to note that Lewis was not a trained scientist on what was basically a scientific mission, but was selected for his leadership skills. To prepare him for the science side, Jefferson sent Meriwether Lewis (a fairly uneducated man at the time of the expedition) around to several Academies of Natural History so he could build his ability to observe, report and understand the natural things he saw. All during the expedition, he sent back a plethora of biological materials sent back to Jefferson during the expedition. Lewis eventually earned several degrees as a result of his work in the Academies. It is this leadership that Jefferson displayed with Lewis that offers a significant leadership lesson.

NOAA Centric or specific leadership issues

Q: Do you see a private sector example from which NOAA could learn or adopt certain positive leadership aspects?

A: There could be several private sector examples, but the two that I think are most significant are the Discovery Channel and IBM. The Discovery Channel exemplifies “Outreach” or “Public Education”. Their style of presentation is something that NOAA could learn from. The recent “Shark Week” was very interesting. That may be a way that NOAA could pass information to our constituents.



The IBM Corporation shows us how you may need to “re-invent” yourself at times. After IBM tried to enter the Personal Computer (PC) market, and basically failed at it, they redefined their business model to be more aligned as an information technology company focused on service rather than just selling hardware. Again, there is a strong “Outreach and Service” orientation as well as the ability to “re-invent yourself” message in his example.

Q: Do you see another government department or agency from which NOAA could learn or adopt certain positive leadership aspects?

A: I think that NOAA is in front of many other government organizations. The U.S. Postal Service does provide an example of an organization that had problems. This is an example of a “Public Corporation” that had little or no innovation. They evolved, or “re-invented” themselves, by providing better service and becoming more “competitive”.

Q: Describe your perspective on NOAA’s succession planning strategies.

A: We have them? I think that few people are aware of NOAA succession planning strategies. We have a strategy here in the my office, but I’ve never seen one that’s organization wide. I think it is important to have good leadership work closely with up and coming leaders. [Mentor/Mentee relationships] An important concept: “If you are going to make mistakes, it is better to do it early with small low budget projects, than make those same mistakes later on with larger and big budget projects.”

To do a good job at developing leaders, you should keep mentors from becoming “figure heads”. The role of mentoring should be incorporated into job performance measures.

Finally, it is important to include or keep the “third tier” involved. What I mean by this is upper level managers or mentors should invite lower lever personnel to attend meetings where they would have the opportunity to observe and learn leadership from a first hand observation. Additionally, it is important

to have “cross-training”, or people who manage various high-level or sophisticated instruments include or involve lower level instrument managers so they can gain the necessary experience to handle those instruments.

What I mean by this is upper level managers or mentors should invite lower lever personnel to attend meetings where they would have the opportunity to observe and learn leadership from a first hand observation.

